

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARAMA 01152 220420Z
ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4580
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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, GY, NS

SUBJECT: GUYANESE OPPOSITION LEADER HIGHLY CRITICAL OF BURNHAM
ON TRIP TO SURINAME

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. CHEDDI JAGAN, LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY IN NEIGHBORING
GUYANA, VISITED SURINAME AUGUST 15-19 AT THE INVITATION OF
OF A NUMBER OF MINOR LEFTIST SURINAMESE POLITICAL PARTIES.
AT JAGAN'S REQUEST, HE ALSO MET WITH PRIME MINISTER HENCK
ARRON. AS ELL AS WITH THE LEADEROF THE SURINAMESE
PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION, JAGGERNATH LACHMON, AND THE
PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT, EMILE WIJNTUIN. ALSO FEATURED
IN JAGAN'S VISIT WERE A SPEECH AND A PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS JAGAN WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE
BURNHAM REGIME. HE CHARACTERIZED THE JULY REFERENDUM AS
FRAUDULENT AND SAID THAT DEMOCRACY NO LONGER EXISTS IN
GUYANA. HE CLAIMED THAT THE RIGHTS TO BE GUARANTEED THE
PEOPLE IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD ONLY EXIST ON PAPER.
ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, HE DECRIED THE FACT THAT THE
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GUYANESE ECONOMY IS IN SUCH BAD SAHPE THAT THE COUNTRY
IS HAVING TO SUBMIT TO HARSH AUSTERITY MEASURES IN ORDER
TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY
FUND. JAGAN CLAIMED THAT ALL THESE ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS
MADE HIM FEARFUL OF A MILITARY COUP IN GUYANA. THE ONLY
SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS IN GUYANA, HE SAID, WOULD BE TO
HOLD ELECTIONS THIS YEAR AND THEN FORM A NATIONAL

PATRIOTIC FRONT, IN WHICH BOTH HE AND BURNHAM WOULD TAKE PART.

3. GUYANESE CHARGE PHILLIP CHAN WHO IS A STRONG BURNHAM SUPPORTER, WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE LOCAL PRESS FOLLOWING JAGAN'S VISIT. AS REPORTED, HE TRIED TO DOWNPLAY THE VISIT BY STATING SARCASTICALLY THAT HE WAS GLAD JAGAN WAS IN GOOD HEALTH, AND THAT IT WAS FINE THAT HE HAD PAID A VISIT HERE TO FURTHER FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. CHAN ADDED THAT JAGAN'S TYPE OF DEMOCRACY DISCRIMINATES AGAINST POINTS OF VIEW DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF JAGAN.

4. THE LOCAL PRESS GAVE EXTRAORDINARY COVERAGE TO THE VISIT. THE LEFT-LEANING VRIJE STEM CASTIGATED BURNHAM ALONG THE LINES OF JAGAN'S REMARKS, WHILE THE CONSERVATIVE DE WEST SAID NEITHER BURNHAM NOR JAGAN HAVE MUCH IN COMMON WITH THE TYPE OF POLITICAL SYSTEM EXISTING IN SURINAME. SO FAR THE MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD DE WQRE TIJD HAS REFRAINED FROM EDITORIAL COMMENT, THOUGH ITS COVERAGE OF THE VISIT WAS THE MOST EXTENSIVE OF THE THREE DAILIES. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: JAGAN SAID THAT THIS VISIT WAS ONE OF A NUMBER HE IS MAKING TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO GAIN SOLIDARITY FOR HIS VIEW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ABOUT THE SITUATION IN GUYANA. WHILE HE CERTAINLY GAINED A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLICITY HERE BY HIS SHARP ATTACKS ON THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME'S CLOSEST NEIGHBOR, IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT EITHER THE GOS OR ANY OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES WILL TAKE SIDES IN HIS DISPUTE WITH THE BURNHAM REGIME. OSTRANDER

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Message Attributes

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